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ABSTRACT

At Oregon's Lane Community College (LCC), all full-time students and students enrolled in English Composition (WR121) are required to take a 35-item writing placement test. Students with test scores deemed "marginal" (i.e, those scoring between 20 and 24 points) are advised to take a preparatory course (WR120) before enrolling in WR121, while students scoring below 20 points are required to first complete the lower-level course. All students scoring below 25 are also required to take a reading test. In spring 1990, a computer program was developed to examine the relationship between test scores and grades earned in a variety of classes at LCC. Study findings for the 1989-90 school year included the following: (1) both writing and reading test scores were positively correlated with grades earned in WR121 and in an advanced writing course (WR122); (2) among new students with marginal writing test scores, 66% of those who took WR121 immediately following the screening test received a C grade or better, while only 54% of those who took the course at a later time performed as well; (3) among students with marginal reading test scores, 66% of those who took the preparatory course (WR120) later received a C grade or better in WR121, as compared with only 46% of the marginal readers who did not take the preparatory course; (4) while writing test scores were positively correlated with students' grades in a technical report writing course, reading test scores showed no correlation; (5) students' writing test scores showed almost no correlation with performance in WR120; and (6) reading test scores were not highly correlated with student success in study skills courses. Data tables are included. (PAA)

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ENTRANCE TESTING AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN WRITING CLASSES AND STUDY SKILLS CLASSES FALL 1989, WINTER 1990, AND SPRING 1990

by Daniel L. Hodges,
Coordinator of Testing

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ENTRANCE TESTING AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN WRITING CLASSES AND STUDY SKILLS CLASSES FALL 1989, WINTER 1990, AND SPRING 1990

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For a number of years LCC has required that full-time students and students taking English Composition, WR121, take a writing placement test and that low scorers also take a reading test. Our intent is to identify students whose skills give them less chance of success and to require them, or in some cases to advise them, to take appropriate preparatory courses. We continue to use the DTLS Sentence Structure Test from the College Board for writing placement. It has 35 items. People who get 25 or higher are admitted to WR121; people who get 20-24 are given a choice, with advice to take WR120 first; people who get less than 20 are required to take a prep class first. Our entering students average 23 right; nationally students average 27 or 28.

Students who score less than 25 on the Sentence Structure Test and foreign students are required to take the 63-item Degrees of Reading Power Test, form CP-1A. A cloze test with missing words that students must infer from context, it is designed to produce scores that match reading difficulty levels of books. From students' scores we have an approximate idea of how well they can handle college reading. The tables below use raw scores. A raw score of 53 indicates ability to handle easier college textbooks. A score of 58 or higher shows ability to handle material harder than all but a few textbooks require.

Last spring LCC's former Programming Manager David Marotta asked experienced programmer Ray Smith to start writing a computer program that would greatly increase our ability to link students' test scores to their grades in various classes. This program is now working and producing a large number of results. The following report summarizes some of the results for the 1989-90 school year. Readers who are curious about further breakdowns are encouraged to ask; some analyses can easily be done, others cannot be.

Writing Test Scores and Grades in English Composition, WR121: Summary

In general, the higher are people's writing test scores, the greater are their chances of getting grades of C and higher in WR121. The students scoring 15 to 19 points, who are required to take a prep class first, do better in WR121 than their scores would predict. The first table below mixes together all WR121 students, whether they took a prep class or not.

(You should note that this table and all of the tables below omit students who dropped the classes during the first week or before. The intent is to avoid counting students whose drops could be due to schedule changes, switched sections, different placement, and so on. Such Drops, if counted, would exaggerate the apparent rates of trouble in a class.)

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Table 1.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR121, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	4%	12%	54%	24
15 - 19	3%	49%	72%	81
20 - 24	6%	37%	63%	411
25 - 30	15%	47%	68%	839
31 - 35	41%	66%	76%	227
No test score	12%	41%	69%	96
Total	15%	46%	68%	1678

Likewise, people's reading test scores correlate with their grades in WR121. People with better reading ability are more likely to get C's or better, B's or better, and A's.

Table 2.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR121, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 40	1%	25%	54%	55
41 - 45	1%	29%	49%	30
46 - 52	2%	32%	63%	125
53 - 58	3%	34%	63%	186
59 - 63	15%	53%	72%	108
Waived Test	20%	50%	70%	1067
Total	15%	46%	68%	1671

The Effect of Taking WR120 Before Taking WR121.

Over the years we have been concerned about the marginal students (defined as scoring 20 to 24 points on the Sentence Structure Test). Since we give them a choice, we have wondered: do the ones who choose to skip WR120 do worse later in WR121 than the ones who take WR120 first? In recent years we have found that taking WR120 was somewhat beneficial, and earlier in the 80's there were a few years where taking WR120 did not help or even seemed "to harm" people's chances in WR121.

This year with the help of the new program I have found a surprising twist to the findings. New students with marginal scores who take WR121 immediately following their test (Winter or Spring 1990) are not hurt by skipping WR120. About two-thirds of them earn C's or better in WR121, just like students who took WR120 first. But other students who also skip WR120 but who delay taking WR121 have lower success rates (54% earning a C or better) than marginal students who take and pass WR120. It is partly due to the fact that 79% of the students who chose to take WR121 immediately were good readers; only 67% of the people who delayed were good readers. But the rest of the explanation is still a mystery. Are they more confident, serious or hard-working people? Or is it simply that some of these people taking WR121 their first term took in the fall when grades are generally higher? Even good readers who delay taking WR121 do worse in it than students who take it immediately.

Another angle to the question of WR120's benefit concerns poor readers. Does it hurt their chances to skip WR120 and go into WR121 directly? The answer is yes. Whereas 66% of the people with reading test scores of 1 to 52 who took WR120 before taking WR121 could get C's or better, only 46% of the total group of poor readers skipping WR120 could do so. And we get the same conclusion if we look at the poor readers who took WR121 their first term: they did more poorly than poor readers who had taken WR120.

Table 3.

The Proportion of Marginal Students (Writing Scores = 20-24) in WR121 Who Get These Grades or Higher: WR120 Taken F89 or W90; WR121 Taken W90 or P90.

	Percent Who Get These Grades or Higher.			
	A	**B**	**C**	**Number**
Took WR120				
Got A	15%	54%	62%	13
Got P	5%	38%	66%	76
Did NOT Take WR120				
All in WR121	4%	31%	54%	168
In WR121 their first term	7%	42%	69%	52
Good Readers: DRP = 53-63.				
Did NOT Take WR120				
All in WR121	6%	32%	58%	132
In WR121 their first term	10%	45%	75%	20
Poor Readers: DRP = 1-52.				
Took WR120				
Got A	17%	17%	67%	6
Got P	5%	38%	66%	70
Did NOT Take WR120				
All in WR121	0%	20%	46%	61
In WR121 their first term	0%	16%	49%	6

Students with Marginal Writing Test Scores and Varying Reading Ability: How Well Do They Do in WR121?

We have found it reasonable to believe that good readers with marginal knowledge of grammar and sentence structure might have enough ability to cope with WR121. And we have doubted that poor readers who also suffered from marginal writing skills could succeed. Last year's experience casts that assumption in doubt. Notice that the following table shows that people with a reading score of 46-52 do as well in WR121 as people scoring 53-58. The two groups with even lower scores are not consistent. But these small groups make it difficult to interpret accurately. (Note: This table lumps together both the people who took WR120 first and those who did not.)

Table 4.

For Marginal Writing Test Scores of 20 to 24:
Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and
Their Grades in WR121, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 40	0%	31%	69%	16
41 - 45	0%	11%	33%	18
46 - 52	4%	33%	64%	93
53 - 58	4%	31%	61%	148
59 - 63	16%	53%	74%	87
Waived Test	0%	41%	62%	29
Total	6%	37%	63%	410*

(*Includes people with no test record.)

OTHER WRITING CLASSES

People's scores on the writing test and reading test can also be linked to their grades in other writing courses, though with less success. Some representative findings follow for courses in the English Department and the Study Skills Department.

WR120

People's writing test scores are almost completely uncorrelated with their grades in WR120. Overall, 77% of the students get grades of Pass or higher; there is a slight tendency for students with scores of 20 or higher to have a better chance at A grades than students with lower scores.

Table 5.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR120, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher		
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 14	5%	75%	56
15 - 19	2%	80%	155
20 - 24	9%	79%	253
25 - 30	11%	80%	149
31 - 35	0%	50%	6
No test score	9%	67%	81
Total	7%	77%	700

The students' reading scores also do not seem to correlate with their chances of passing WR120 with a grade of P, but they do correlate mildly with their chances of getting an A.

Table 6.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR120, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher		
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 45	1%	79%	115
46 - 52	2%	79%	133
53 - 58	10%	80%	154
59 - 63	10%	78%	44
Waived--high writing score	12%	77%	136
No test score	8%	70%	116
Total	7%	77%	700

Communication Skills I

Students in certain vocational programs take Communication Skills I. If they score below 15 on the writing test, we recommend they take a prep course first, but we do not enforce it. The figures don't show a consistent link between writing skill and success in Comm. Skills, but the low numbers of students in each category make for unstable results, anyway.

Table 7.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in Communication Skills I, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	40%	100%	100%	5
15 - 19	17%	64%	85%	19
20 - 24	5%	25%	45%	20
25 - 30	23%	52%	64%	17
31 - 35	50%	50%	50%	2
No test score	25%	48%	53%	22
Total	19%	50%	63%	85

The students' reading scores also do not seem to correlate with their chances of passing Communication Skills I. Again, low numbers of persons in each category render the figures suspect.

Table 8.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in Communication Skills I, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	42%	71%	100%	7
46 - 52	10%	55%	82%	11
53 - 58	5%	47%	68%	19
59 - 63	25%	50%	50%	4
Waived--high writing score	25%	51%	62%	19
No test score	24%	55%	55%	16
Total	19%	50%	63%	85

WR122

Since WR122 is the second college-level writing course, it becomes interesting to investigate whether students' original test scores influence their grades. When we consider that the purpose of WR120 and WR121 is to teach many basic writing skills and to review basic grammar and sentence structure, we might predict that students will learn these skills so that their old entering test scores are outmoded. On the other hand, we have long known that the Sentence Structure Test assesses skills that are not intended to be taught up to criterion in WR120 and WR121, so these test scores might still influence later classes. Also, when we consider the multiple purposes of WR121 and its focus on essay structure and its

short time span of 10 weeks, then we might predict that the entering abilities as measured by test scores would still affect students' grades.

The results of last year's testing demonstrate that writing test scores do predict grades in WR122. The correlations are almost perfectly regular. The higher are people's test scores, the better their chances of getting A's, A's or B's, or C's and higher. The only minor exception is that marginal students getting 20 to 24 points on the test are less likely to get B's or better than students with even lower on the test.

Table 9.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR122, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	0%	32%	49%	6
15 - 19	0%	33%	57%	37
20 - 24	4%	27%	66%	148
25 - 30	12%	43%	67%	340
31 - 35	33%	69%	77%	122
No test score	16%	39%	66%	212
Total	16%	44%	69%	865

Students' tested reading ability also continues to influence their performance in WR122. The effects are weaker and less consistent than the effect of the abilities measured by the writing test, but they are there. The reader should recall that virtually all the students who took the reading test were required to do so because they scored less than 25 points on the writing test. So we see that the good readers outperform the poor readers in WR122, despite the fact that they all did somewhat poorly on the writing test.

The reader will notice that there is an anomaly with the poorest readers, those who got 1 to 45 points on the reading test. 92% of them got C's or better. I wonder if many of those 13 poor readers in WR122 were foreign students. They could get C's but had ordinary chances of getting B's and A's.

Table 10.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR122, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	7%	30%	92%	13
46 - 52	3%	23%	54%	45
53 - 58	6%	30%	62%	79
59 - 63	2%	45%	74%	28
Waived Test	17%	46%	69%	699
Total	16%	44%	69%	865

WR123

The third course in the series is WR123. By now fewer students are taking writing, and they have learned still more. Do their entering writing abilities as measured by the Sentence Structure Test still affect them? Two effects are apparent. (1) Students's chances of getting A's are still correlated with their entrance test scores. The higher were their test scores, the higher their chances of getting A's. Only 12% of the students who scored less than 15 on the writing test got A's, and 46% of the top-scoring students who got 31 to 35 points got A's. (2) The top-scoring students with 31 to 35 points are more likely than the others to get C's or better and B's or better. Otherwise, there are no apparent differences among students with various lower test scores.

Table 11.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR123, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	12%	62%	87%	8
15 - 19	19%	52%	63%	27
20 - 24	19%	51%	61%	84
25 - 30	26%	50%	63%	174
31 - 35	49%	64%	69%	55
No test score	19%	46%	56%	169
Total	25%	51%	62%	517

The students' entering reading abilities also show little clear relationship to their chances of getting various grades in WR123. Again, please recall that most people who took the reading test got low writing test scores. And note the anomalously high grades of the poorest readers. Foreign students, perhaps?

Table 12.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR123, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	29%	75%	92%	24
46 - 52	6%	48%	69%	19
53 - 58	11%	36%	44%	48
59 - 63	49%	64%	72%	26
Waived Test	26%	51%	61%	400
Total	25%	51%	62%	517

Technical Report Writing -- WR227

Technical Report Writing is taken by a variety of students, often a number of terms after their entrance testing is done. Yet their writing test scores are linked to their chances for all levels of grades. In the table below disregard the figures for students whose test scores were below 20, for there are only 5 of them.

Table 13.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR227, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	0%	50%	100%	2
15 - 19	0%	67%	100%	3
20 - 24	7%	38%	61%	13
25 - 30	22%	43%	64%	28
31 - 35	49%	62%	75%	8
No test score	24%	49%	78%	28
Total	22%	48%	72%	82

There is no pattern discernible for students' reading test scores and grades in Technical Report Writing. Part of the problem again is low category sizes.

Table 14.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR227, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	100%	100%	100%	1
46 - 52	0%	50%	100%	2
53 - 58	0%	60%	80%	5
59 - 63	0%	20%	40%	5
Waived--high writing score	28%	49%	70%	33
No test	22%	47%	75%	36
Total	22%	48%	72%	82

Basic English Grammar & Sentence Writing

The Testing Office refers students with writing test scores below 20 and poor readers with marginal writing test scores to this class. Students' writing test scores particularly influence their chances of getting B's and A's, less so their chances of getting at least a C.

Table 15.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in BEGSW, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	11%	43%	72%	59
15 - 19	31%	53%	74%	82
20 - 24	52%	65%	78%	32
25 - 30	60%	88%	94%	18
31 - 35	100%	100%	100%	1
No test score	33%	46%	59%	31
Total	34%	56%	75%	223

People's reading ability also influences their chances of getting A's and B's and C's or better in BEGSW. Overall student success rates are quite high, even for poor readers.

Table 16.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in BEGSW, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	17%	41%	69%	75
46 - 52	28%	48%	68%	50
53 - 58	39%	63%	85%	28
59 - 63	61%	84%	92%	13
No Test--High Writing Score	63%	88%	94%	16
No Test--other reasons	37%	56%	66%	41
Total	34%	56%	75%	223

Advanced English Grammar and Sentence Writing

Since only 15 people took this class last year, we cannot do any meaningful statistical comparisons. However, 10 of the 15 passed with a P or better and 2 more passed with D's.

Basic Paragraph Writing

The Testing Office refers some of the better readers among the students scoring poorly on the writing test to this class. People's writing scores are strongly linked to their chances of getting A's and B's and less clearly so to their chances of getting at least a C. Overall success is high. The people scoring 25-30 points do less well than expected, but the category is small and random fluctuations may explain it.

Table 17.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in Basic Paragraph Writing, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	10%	36%	62%	23
15 - 19	17%	56%	69%	31
20 - 24	35%	70%	80%	20
25 - 30	46%	55%	55%	11
31 - 35	0%	100%	100%	1
No test score	29%	65%	72%	14
Total	25%	59%	71%	100

People's reading ability also roughly correlates with their chances of getting A's and B's and C's or higher in Basic Paragraph Writing. Most students succeed. Low numbers in certain categories make some percentages unreliable.

Table 18.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in Basic Paragraph Writing, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 45	4%	34%	58%	37
46 - 52	22%	70%	79%	23
53 - 58	46%	73%	82%	11
59 - 63	67%	67%	67%	3
No Test--High Writing Score	40%	60%	60%	10
No Test--other reasons	31%	63%	69%	16
Total	23%	55%	68%	1 0 0

Preparatory English Composition for Foreign Students--WR110.

A number of foreign students are referred to WR110 in order to help them deal with aspects of English writing that are particularly troublesome to people who learn English as a second language. Most of them are tested. Success rates are very high. There is some link between their abilities as measured by the Sentence Structure Test and their chances of A and B grades in WR110. Low numbers make parts of this table suspect, too.

Table 19.

Students' Sentence Structure Test Scores and Their Grades in WR110, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Sentence Structure Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 14	28%	64%	91%	11
15 - 19	48%	90%	95%	19
20 - 24	37%	89%	89%	27
25 - 30	75%	92%	100%	12
31 - 35	50%	50%	50%	2
No test score	0%	67%	100%	3
Total	43%	84%	92%	74

Since the foreign students preponderantly score low on the DRP test, I have regrouped the scores. But the still small categories make the normal random events have a big influence on the statistics. And these figures show little relationship between foreign students' reading abilities and success in WR110. Their reading ability is significantly linked to their likelihood of getting A's, but not to their chances for B's and C's. This means that the better readers (scores higher than 30) are much more likely to go directly from WR110 to WR121 than the poorer readers are. Even so only about one-half of the foreign students can go directly from WR110 to WR121.

Table 20.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in WR110, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Number**
1 - 30	18%	73%	91%	11
31 - 40	49%	92%	92%	28
41 - 45	54%	100%	100%	13
46 - 99	56%	69%	81%	16
No test--other reasons	0%	67%	100%	6
Total	43%	84%	92%	74

People's Reading Ability and Their Grades in ALL English & Foreign Language Classes.

How does people's reading ability affect their performance in the English & Foreign Language Department in general? I asked the computer program to check for people's grades in all classes in the department during the first term they took classes after testing. Thus, if the date on a person's reading test was Fall 1989, the program looked for any English Department classes they took during Fall 1990. Similarly for Winter 1990 and Spring 1990. The table reports on A, B or higher, and P or higher grades because many classes in the department give Pass/No Pass grades, and a Pass is equivalent to a C.

There are several things to notice in this table.

First, success rates in the department as a whole are comparable to those in the writing classes.

Second, people's reading ability does seem to correlate with their chances of getting B's and A's, if we disregard the very poorest readers, many of whom will be foreign students. Since only 20% of the readers scoring 46 to 52 points got B's and A's, we have to ask if that is unduly low. Are they satisfied with C's?

Third, reading ability does not seem to correlate with chances of getting a grade of Pass or higher.

Fourth, the success rates of these new students in their first term at LCC taking English & F.L. courses (74%) are almost exactly equal to the success rates of more experienced students (73%). This finding demonstrates that the department provides satisfactory access to new students.

Table 21.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in All English & Foreign Language Classes, Taken during their First Term, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 45	12%	26%	74%	65
46 - 52	9%	19%	77%	128
53 - 58	13%	29%	73%	226
59 - 63	17%	42%	76%	120
Waived--high writing score	24%	51%	75%	1024
No test	19%	41%	67%	449
Total tested	21%	44%	74%	2015
Returning students	24%	48%	73%	8015
Grand total	23%	46%	73%	10030

Reading Ability and Success in Study Skills Classes

The next table provides a global summary of students' success in all Study Skills classes except for Effective Learning, which is described in Table 23 below. These figures are for courses students took during their first term at LCC. (Students who took more than one course are represented for each course they took.) The principal fact emerging is that reading ability is not much correlated with students' grades in Study Skills, except perhaps for chances at A grades. There are some small trends, especially in the chances for B's and A's that a reader can note. Overall success rates are high.

The generally high success rates are probably due to the nature of Study Skills classes and the supportive ethos in the department. However, the lower success rates of returning students are a bit of a puzzle.

Table 22.

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in All Study Skills Classes, Except Effective Learning, Taken during their First Term, Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 30	19%	41%	73%	93
31 - 35	27%	46%	86%	57
36 - 40	27%	48%	78%	82
41 - 45	29%	54%	86%	83
46 - 52	22%	45%	77%	154
53 - 63	38%	51%	75%	77
Waived--high writing score	31%	36%	75%	58
No test	15%	23%	75%	48
Total tested	27%	46%	79%	424
Returning students	18%	35%	72%	1157
Grand total	21%	38%	74%	1809

Effective Learning

Effective Learning uses college level reading assignments to teach students how to study effectively. The instructors have long reported that poor readers have more trouble in this class than good readers. Students' experience last year partly confirms this observation, but also demonstrates that it is not a dramatic phenomenon. 60% of the poorest readers passed, and 55% of the students with reading scores of 46 to 52 (also below college level reading) passed the class, whereas 69% of the next higher group, competent readers, got P grades or higher. This table includes all students in Effective Learning, thus some of them have been at LCC for some time after testing and their reading ability may now be higher than when it was first tested. These general levels of success for poor readers are consistent with our findings for followup research several times in the past.

In passing, I want to note that people's writing test scores (table not included) also correlate with their success in Effective Learning. Even the poorest writers (scores of 1 to 14) have better than a 50-50 chance of success.

Table 23

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in Effective Learning Classes, Taken Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 45	12%	36%	60%	95
46 - 52	14%	41%	55%	101
53 - 58	27%	58%	69%	102
59 - 63	25%	72%	74%	43
Waived--high writing score	47%	73%	79%	234
No test	33%	56%	65%	162
Total	31%	58%	69%	738

Basic Reading & Spelling (old course, Fall 1989)

For Fall 1989 registration we referred the lowest readers (1 to 45 points) to Basic Reading & Spelling. 12 of these students plus 5 with higher scores took it. 9 of the 17 passed with a C or better. There is no discernible correlation of tested reading ability with grades.

Reading (old course, Fall 1989)

Also for Fall 1989 registration we referred medium-poor readers (46 to 52 points) to Reading. 62 people enrolled; only 29 had 46 to 52 points, and another 29 had lower scores, placed in the class after testing by Study Skills staff. Reading ability strongly affected students' chances for A's and B's, but about 70% of everybody got P's or higher.

Table 24

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in Reading, Taken Fall 1989.

	Percent who get this grade or higher			
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**A**	**B**	**P**	**Number**
1 - 45	3%	28%	69%	29
46 - 52	19%	60%	70%	29
No test	0%	25%	50%	4
Total	9%	41%	67%	62

Reading 1 (Winter and Spring 1990)

The new series of reading classes began in Winter 1990. During the year 12 students of the 17 who had taken the old Basic Reading & Spelling took one or more courses in this series. Note that some of these students may have taken more than one course. All of them passed.

Reading 1 was designed for very poor readers. Students scoring 31 to 35 points on the DRP test are directed to the class. 17 people took it, 14 got grades of P, and 3 did not complete it. Only 5 students took this class during their first term at LCC, judging by the date of their reading test. Note that 10 students in the class have very low scores of 1 to 30 points, theoretically at ABE class levels. Yet 8 of them passed it.

Table 25

Students' Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores and Their Grades in Reading 1 Classes, Taken Fall 1989 to Spring 1990.

	Percent who get this grade or higher	
Degrees of Reading Power Test Scores	**P**	**Number**
1 - 30	80%	10
31 - 35	100%	2
36 - 40	0%	0
No test	100%	3
Total	82%	17

Reading 2 (Winter and Spring 1990)

Students scoring 36 to 40 points on the reading test are referred to Reading 2. Only 6 of the 23 people who took the class were in their first term at LCC, judging by the date of their reading test. Only 1 person had taken Reading 1 before enrolling in Reading 2. 14 of them passed with a D or better.

Reading 3 (Winter and Spring 1990)

Students scoring 41 to 45 points on the DRP test are referred to Reading 3. Only 19 of the 41 people were in the first term at LCC after taking their reading test. Five of the students had taken Reading 2 and passed; 3 of them had dropped Reading 2 and enrolled in Reading 3. An additional 7 students had not taken Reading 2 and had test scores of 40 or less, below the theoretical cutoff. Five of the 7 earned B's and C's, and the other 2 did not finish. Overall success rates are high, 80% earning a P.

Reading 4 (Winter and Spring 1990)

Students scoring 46 to 52 points on the reading test are referred to Reading 4. About half (27) of the 55 students took it during their first term at LCC (judging again from the reading test date); the rest took it later. Six of the students had taken Reading 3 previously and passed it; one had dropped Reading 3 to enter Reading 4. Ten of the students who had not taken Reading 3 previously had reading scores below 46 points (the theoretical cutoff); 1 got A, 3 got B, 5 got C, and 1 got P. 78% of the class passed with a P or higher.

Comment on Reading 1, 2, 3, and 4

Most of the students are not entering the Reading sequence and proceeding through it. It is also apparent that many students with test scores that are theoretically too low are entering the reading courses and succeeding. This may be due to the additional testing that the Study Skills instructors do in the first few days of classes. I have not seen their added test results. It is also possible that since reading is a complex skill any well-taught reading course can help students who have a broad range of partially developed reading skills.

Summary

This year's followup information on testing and placement often shows that test scores can correlate with people's grades. That is good to see. But there are larger goals that we must continue to work for.

When this research is combined with the Title III followup research, we find that our placement and remediation efforts still do not accomplish as much as we would like. We have, perhaps I can say fairly, only a mildly helpful process. We often hope that the tests will accurately identify students in need of help, that we can set precise cutoff scores, and that the courses will teach students all the knowledge and skills they are lacking within just a few terms. We aren't doing that yet, and I just want to remind us all of that fact with a quiet voice.

In order to reach that vision, we first need to carefully analyze the knowledge and skills required, design the courses with precision, analyze the teaching methods required, have all teachers of similar courses teach and grade with precision and rigor, design placement tests to the specifications of the courses, provide the students with a lot of support, and persuade the public (and ourselves) that it will be worthwhile. We cannot expect too much of our current practice of using commercial standardized tests to place students in course sequences that overlap a lot and that have unclear entry and exit criteria.

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